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Map of Usage vs. Representation of Services on the Library Homepage - Internal Report

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PROJECT

Map of Usage vs. Representation of Services on the Library Homepage – Internal Report

Library Website – Fall 2012

AUTHOR(S)

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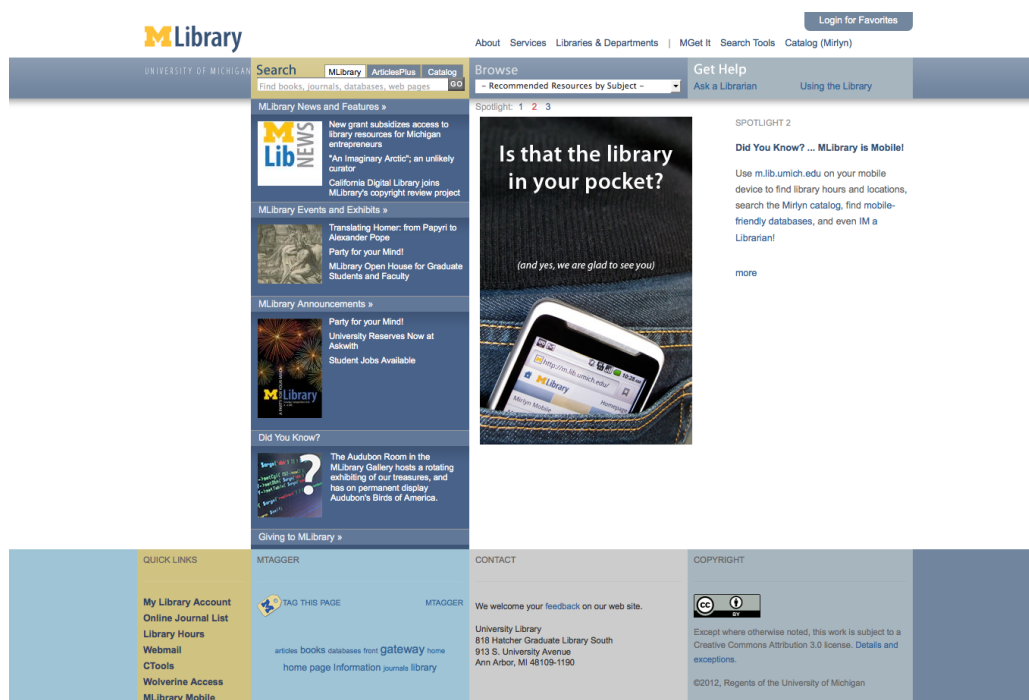
SHORT DESCRIPTION

A “heat map” showing use of online services vs. the real estate allotted to them on the homepage. This report was written as an informal internal report and may contain reference to sources like Google Analytics profiles that are not publicly available.

REPORT INFO

Report date: 11/16/2012

Online location: www.lib.umich.edu/usability-library/usability-report/heat-map



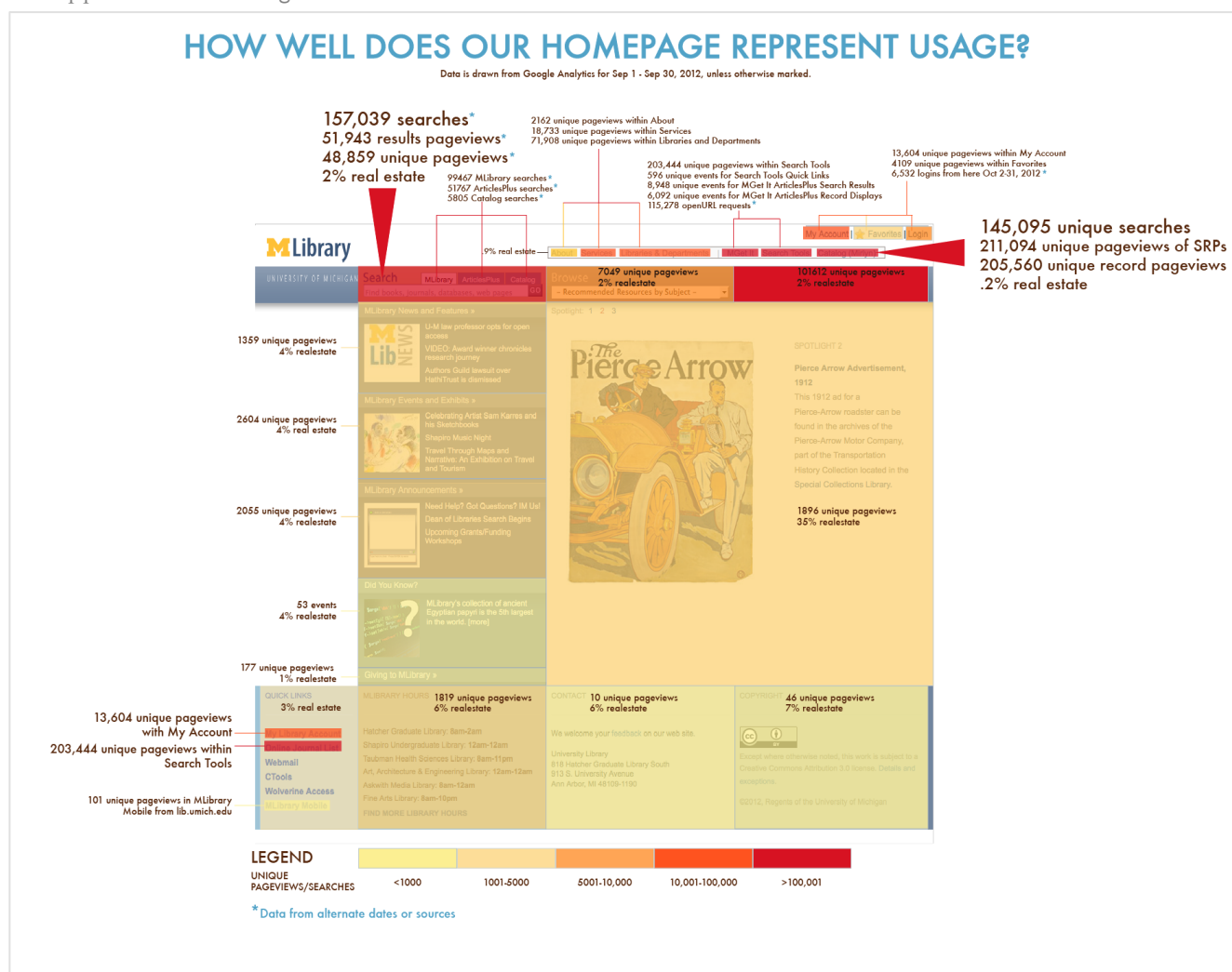
Problem Statement

The goal of this project was to create a “heat map” relating usage of different online library services to the home page real estate allotted to them. To do this, we gathered usage statistics from Google Analytics and the MLibrary search dashboard and created an image featuring the homepage with colored overlays over different sections to illustrate where usage was low or high. Note that the statistics reflected usage of services/sections rather than clicks on individual pages--for example, statistics for the “Catalog (Mirlyn)” link included use of all of Mirlyn rather than just clicks on that link to the Mirlyn homepage.

Outcome

Map

(see appendix 1 for enlarged version)



Recommendations

This map shows that areas of highest use are concentrated into the top and sides of the homepage. Although this assessment was not intended to yield actionable recommendations on its own, our map does suggest that we consider allocating more homepage real estate to high-use services.

Data

The data for this heat map was largely drawn from the Google Analytics ALL-MLibrary profile, using the date range Sep 1 - Sep 30, 2012.

Major complications:

- It was often difficult to know exactly where a section ended. For instance, the Libraries & Departments section included data for each library/department homepage as well as the Libraries & Departments listing. However, if a library homepage also linked to, say, MPublishing, should usage of the MPublishing homepage be counted among the Libraries & Departments? To handle these judgments consistently, we decided to draw the line at one level down-- that is, Libraries & Departments would include the Libraries & Departments page and individual library/department homepages, *and no other pages linked to those homepages*. This means that some pages which might be counted as belonging to the Libraries & Departments section were not included in the usage stats for that section.
- Search Tools pageviews are artificially raised by dynamic search -- since results are generated dynamically, if someone is typing slowly then individual substrings might be counted as different searches.
- We do not currently have statistics on how often the MGet It link in the header has been clicked. Serials Solutions provided two statistics for openURL requests that went to MGet It in September 2012 (115,278 and 124, 691); since they did not account for the discrepancy, I went with the more conservative number. Kenyon Stuart notes that "this number includes requests using the 1-Click functionality in the 360 Link openURL link resolver which bypasses the MGet It menu ... it also include the times that clicking the MGet It link in ArticlesPlus used the Direct Linking functionality in Summon to link directly to the article bypassing the MGet It menu."
- Ken Varnum notes that although we track the number of times the MGet It link was clicked in ArticlesPlus, we cannot at this time tell how many of those clicks resulted in a Summon direct link, a 360 Link one-click link, or a 360 Link screen.
- The Libraries & Departments number is skewed because of all the in-house computers that open with the Hatcher, Shapiro, or Taubman pages as their homepage
- The 'About' link section has overlaps with other sections, including Libraries & Departments and Services. In order to avoid overlaps, the figures here are only from the 'About Us' section.

- Bigger sections with more links will automatically have higher usage, since there are more links to click on.
- Some sections are presented as low use because they have low clickthroughs, but they may not need clickthroughs to be effective. This is especially true for the spotlight and 'Did You Know' sections, but could also be true of the events and news sections.

Minor complications:

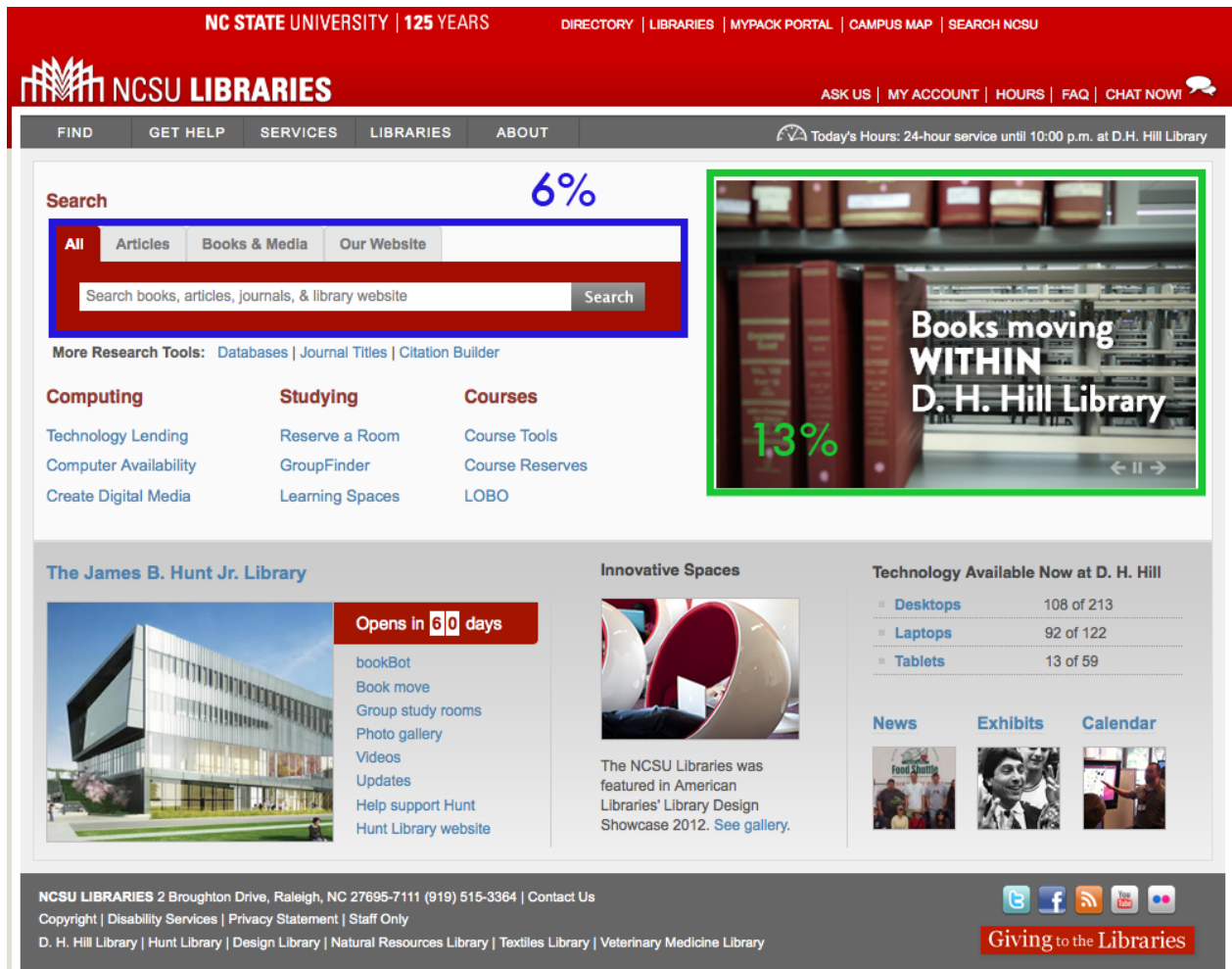
- Obviously links take up little real estate; however, we should keep in mind that they could have been big buttons or links in larger color blocks or even bigger text to make them more visible or cover more area, so it is still worth calculating the real estate allotted to individual links. Note that the ideal real estate allotment to important links might still be small: for example, the login link *shouldn't* be the whole page.
- When there are services with multiple links from the homepage, we haven't always distinguished which link people were clicking. For example, the 'Search Tools' link in the header and the 'Online Journals' link in Quick Links both link to Search Tools.
- Different date ranges
 - The login data was drawn from a different date range since it wasn't being tracked Sep 1 – Sep 30.
 - The library hours tool changed during September: first it was a link in Quick Links, then it was both a link in Quick Links and the block in the footer underneath the left-hand column, and then it was just the footer block.
- Different data sources
 - The MLibrary search data was drawn from Ken's search dashboard
 - Mirlyn search info comes from the Mirlyn analytics profile rather than the ALL-MLibrary profile
 - The lib guides data was drawn from the WITH SUBDOMAINS profile rather than the ALL-MLibrary profile
- Different data types
 - Some stats are noted as 'events' because they are tracked as events instead of pageviews
- Real estate percentages were rounded
- Note that the percentages offered are percentages of the whole page, not percentages of the visible area on any given screen.

Discussion

How do we compare to other libraries?

In addition to examining our own home page real estate allocation, we compared selected aspects to two other library homepages which have generally been perceived positively by committee members thus far: NYU Poly's Bern Dibner library's home page, and the NCSU libraries' home page.

NYU Poly's Bern Dibner Library homepage, with real estate percentage annotations



NCSU Library homepage, with real estate percentage annotations

Search

While MLibrary's homepage currently allocates 2% of its real estate to search, Bern Dibner's site allocates a whopping 44% to search, and NCSU allocates 6%. NCSU's site is especially interesting as it demonstrates how a search box can be made highly visible with only a small amount of real estate: the color and location of the search box make it very prominent on the page, even though it is only 6% of the page.

Spotlight

While MLibrary currently allocates 35% of its homepage real estate to a spotlight on library resources, Bern Dibner allocates 8% and NCSU allocates 13%.

Where do we go from here?

Although it is too early to make any definite design recommendations, we do recommend that designers continue thinking about usage of services and the homepage real estate allotted to them as they go forward with improvements to the library website.

One question to keep in mind as we make changes to the site is the *goal* of the site. If we consider the goal of the homepage to be to represent all parts of the library, the end product may look very different from if we consider the goal of the homepage to make the most used services easily accessible to users. Defining the goal of the site, however, is out of the scope of this subproject.

With regards to future statistics gathering, we recommend creating a separate Google Analytics profile that excludes in-house IPs. This will help us separate public computer use from off-campus use of the library website, and will help us address skewing of pageview counts for individual library pages like Hatcher, Shapiro, and Taubman, which are the homepages of the public computers housed in those buildings.

Appendix 1 – Heat Map

(see next page)

HOW WELL DOES OUR HOMEPAGE REPRESENT USAGE?

Data is drawn from Google Analytics for Sep 1 - Sep 30, 2012, unless otherwise marked.

